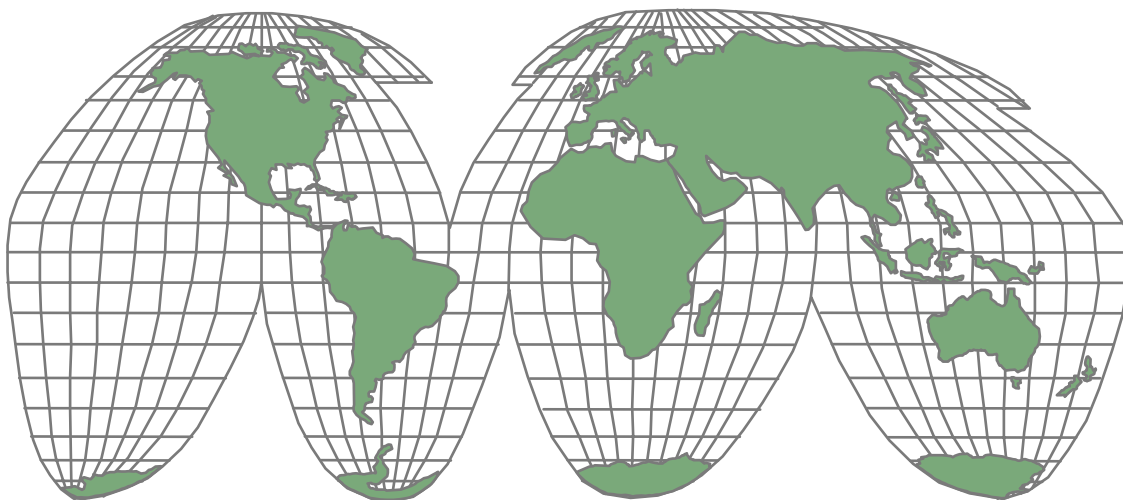


# ***International Activities Report***



***2002***

## **Acknowledgment**

The International Relations Office (IRO) would like to express grateful appreciation to all those who helped make this report possible. Individuals from each of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) districts, divisions and offices described herein took time to review and update their respective sections, providing invaluable data.

Many people took additional time to review other sections of the report and provided IRO with accurate details to ensure that the descriptions of the various organizations, research projects, documents and other activities were as accurate as possible. While there is not enough space here to adequately thank each of these persons individually, we wish to make clear our appreciation for their efforts and contributions.

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International Activities Report  
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## **Executive Summary**

This summary is intended to give a general overview of the contents of this report. Summarized here are the international activities in which Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) participates. TxDOT's involvement in international activities has dramatically increased in recent years and the effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have only accelerated and expanded the range and number of TxDOT's binational and multinational connections and the prospects for more communication and growing relationships. While the majority of the agency's international activity is with Mexico, TxDOT also interacts with other nations. Since 1994, approximately 1,428 engineers and technicians from 35 countries, including Mexico, have visited TxDOT.

In anticipation of the implementation of NAFTA, TxDOT created the International Relations Office (IRO). The IRO is instrumental in facilitating TxDOT's contribution to improve transportation infrastructure in other countries by facilitating visits to TxDOT by foreign transportation professionals. The Office provides support and advice to TxDOT district offices and divisions, as well as to other governmental entities, such as the Governor's Office and the Secretary of State's Office. The IRO serves as TxDOT's representative on a number of international committees and is responsible for compiling data and producing reports on TxDOT's international activities. Although the IRO has been the primary lead in international activities, successful projects have been accomplished thanks to the active role of the Assistant Executive Director for Border Trade Transportation and several TxDOT divisions, offices and districts, particularly those along the border.

The creation of the Assistant Executive Director for Border Trade Transportation position in 1999 took TxDOT to a new level in its commitment to supporting the Texas-Mexican trade and the transportation-related needs of the state. The Assistant Executive Director works closely with the Transportation Commission, the TxDOT Administration, the IRO and the border districts, as well as other TxDOT divisions and offices, to find and direct resources to expedite strategically important border trade transportation projects. In addition, the Assistant Executive Director chaired TxDOT's Border Trade Transportation Task Force, which established the department's priorities along the border from Brownsville to El Paso.

The Pharr, Laredo and El Paso districts have a long history of cooperation with transportation officials in neighboring Mexican states. All three districts have made extensive efforts to work closely and develop productive working relationships with their Mexican neighbors. A shared goal is an ongoing planning and programming process. The three border district engineers (DEs) and other division directors are involved in many border-related projects. Some examples include the El Paso District working with the University of Chihuahua to develop a Technology Transfer Center at the university, and the Laredo District hosting a binational Value Engineering (VE) exercise for the second international bridge in Eagle Pass. The Pharr District, along with the Design Division, has taken the lead in participating in and developing Value Engineering efforts border-wide, including an important Value Engineering study in the Sierra Madre Mountains. In addition, engineers from the border districts have taught and facilitated engineering presentations at several Mexican

universities, including the Mexican Transportation Institute (Instituto Mexicano de Transporte - IMT).

Many of TxDOT's divisions and offices are involved in different areas related to international activities. For example, in addition to hosting numerous international visits, the Construction Division (CST) provides technical support for the Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee (LTSS) Working Group 2 on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions. The Design Division (DES) provides staff support for the Border Technology Exchange Program (BTEP) and the Joint Working Committee (JWC). Some of the most important activities in this regard have been the previously mentioned VE workshops. DES has the border-wide lead in bringing together TxDOT and Mexican engineers through VE. In addition, DES has the responsibility of compiling the *Planning Activities along the Texas-Mexico Border* report mandated by the Texas Legislature (Article 6673j-1 of the Texas Civil Statutes).

The Motor Carrier Division (MCD) assists in the development of administrative rules and procedures for border port authorities to issue oversize/overweight permits. The Motor Carrier Division along with the Traffic Operations Division (TRF) managed the development of the Texas Intelligent Transportation System/Commercial Vehicle Operations (ITS/CVO) Business Plan, which was completed in January 2001.

The Research and Technology Implementation Office (RTI) administers the federal Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP). Through this program, university professors from Texas have given transportation-engineering courses at universities in other countries.

The Transportation Planning and Programming Division (TPP) serves as the point of contact and is the lead for the Texas international bridge approval process. The TPP Director, along with the IRO Director, represents TxDOT on the Joint Working Committee and monitors implementation of the binational plan. TPP, in conjunction with a consultant team, developed the Texas Transportation Plan that contains policies, strategies and actions related to the Texas-Mexico border area and is overseeing an update of the plan. Meetings between TxDOT planners and Mexican state and federal planners (along the Texas-Mexico border) have been important accomplishments under this plan.

The Travel Division (TRV) is involved in international communications and activities by virtue of the travel information and literature it publishes and distributes. Travel literature is mailed throughout the world, with approximately 48,793 packets mailed to international destinations during the 2001 calendar year.

The Vehicle Titles and Registration Division (VTR) has addressed border area registration and insurance issues by developing pertinent policies and procedures and by identifying the need for statutory guidance in specific areas. Particularly significant is the partnering of VTR with the MCD and the Texas Department of Public Safety to educate Mexican counterparts and the private sector on Texas' legal commercial vehicle operational requirements.

This report is divided into three major sections and documents the international activities in which TxDOT participates on a regular basis. The first section summarizes activities according to the TxDOT entity that is primarily involved. The next section contains more detailed descriptions of the activities noted in part one. The third section lists some reference documents and other publications related to TxDOT's international involvement.

Information for this report was compiled from several sources. The IRO contributed data for the activities in which it participates directly. The various divisions, districts and offices mentioned in this report were consulted to update their respective sections. When data was directly available from the organization described (i.e., Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee) such documentation was also used. The United States Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration and the U.S. State Department also contributed information contained in this report. Additional information on most of the activities included in this report can be obtained from TxDOT's International Relations Office at (512) 374-5326 or by fax at (512) 374-5325. This report may also be found in Spanish and English at <http://www.dot.state.tx.us/iro/>.

**SECTION I**  
**ACTIVITY SUMMARIES BY TxDOT ENTITY**

## **Assistant Executive Director for Border Trade Transportation**

The Assistant Executive Director for Border Trade Transportation is responsible for identifying trade transportation-related needs along the border, advising the Commission and Executive Director regarding border needs, and expediting and coordinating responses to those needs. Other duties include:

- Coordinating with stakeholders at the local, state and federal levels in both the U.S. and Mexico.
- Expediting solutions by cutting through bureaucratic "red tape."
- Recommending methods for optimum leverage of limited funds to meet the needs of trade traffic.
- Channeling TxDOT personnel resources to areas of most need to maximize efficiency.
- Coordinating the development of Border Safety Inspection Stations with the Texas Department of Public Safety.
- Serving as project manager for the development of a model border crossing facility.

The Assistant Executive Director for Border Trade Transportation chaired the Border Trade Transportation Task Force, which included a member of the Texas Transportation Commission, TxDOT's Executive Director, the border district engineers, and the Directors of the Transportation Planning and Programming Division and the International Relations Office. The Border Trade Transportation Task Force Report was released in October 1999. As indicated in the report, \$1.2 billion of new funding was approved for the three border districts. Upon completion of the update of the Texas Transportation Plan and completion of the Statewide Travel Demand Model (expected in early 2003), the Task Force will reconvene to determine the international trade transportation needs of Texas for the Year 2025 and how these needs can best be met.



## **Border Safety Inspection Stations**

Texas Senate Bill 913, 76<sup>th</sup> Legislature (1999), directed TxDOT to choose locations for border safety inspection facilities along major highways at or near border crossings with Mexico in Brownsville, in Laredo and in El Paso so that all federal, state and municipal agencies that regulate the passage of persons and vehicles crossing the border at those specific crossings might be located in one place; and, to establish and maintain inspection stations at the locations chosen only if the federal agencies involved in the regulation of the passage of persons or vehicles at that border crossing agreed to the design of the facility and agreed to use the facility at the designated location if built.

The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) and TxDOT were responsible for site selection and possible acquisition of right-of-way for the Border Safety Inspection Facilities (BSIFs) and weigh stations near the existing federal inspection stations. The specific locations were chosen because they were considered the eight highest commercial traffic crossings along the Texas-Mexico border.

There are currently eight permanent border safety inspection facilities under development at the Bridge of the Americas and Zaragoza-Ysleta in El Paso; World Trade Bridge and Colombia-Solidarity Bridge in Laredo; Camino Real International in Eagle Pass; Pharr-Reynosa International Bridge in Pharr; Veterans International Bridge at Los Tomates and Free Trade Bridge at Los Indios in Brownsville. Each will provide for an efficient method of inspecting and weighing commercial vehicles entering the United States at the Texas-Mexico border. Construction of the permanent BSIFs is pending completion of the Plans, Specifications and Estimates (PS&E) process.

A "prototype facility" has been developed to adapt to all eight locations. Also, a site selection study and environmental assessment has been completed for each location. A preferred site has been selected at six of the eight locations and public hearings have been held. The two exceptions are Zaragoza / Ysleta and Camino Real International. Additional sites are being evaluated at both of these locations.

Temporary border safety inspection facilities will be constructed at the eight ports of entry along the Texas-Mexico border for the purpose of inspecting and weighing trucks on a more regular basis once the border opens. This is a temporary situation until the permanent BSIFs can be designed and constructed. The eight temporary locations will be the same as the permanent ones, with all temporary facilities operational by early 2003.

## **International Relations Office (IRO)**

The IRO coordinates functions, operations and information relating to international activities for TxDOT. The long-term objective of these activities is to improve international coordination of the following:

- Texas-Mexico border transportation infrastructure planning and programming.
- The provision of cross-border technical exchange with Mexican Border States and the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes (SCT) to improve the safe and efficient flow of traffic across the Rio Grande border.
- The coordination of commercial motor carrier laws, rules and regulations.

In the above context, below are the Director's and the office's major responsibilities:

- Serve as the TxDOT contact on international relations activities for the Governor's Office, the Secretary of State's Office, legislative officials, other governmental entities (foreign, federal and state), FHWA, businesses, interest groups and the public.
- Represent and serve as liaison for TxDOT at the international, national and state levels on matters involving other countries, including the U.S.-Mexico Binational Joint Working Committee, the U.S.-Mexico Binational Bridges and Border Crossings Group, the Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee, the Border Governors' Conference and other similar forums.
- Represent TxDOT as necessary before the Commission, the Legislature and its committees, other agencies and the public on matters regarding international relations.
- Represent TxDOT on the Texas-Mexico Commerce and International Relations Initiative Unit. The Initiative Unit was formed to: study the trade relations between the state of Texas, Mexico and the U.S. states that border Texas; develop and adopt the Texas-Mexico Commerce and International Relations Coordinated Plan; develop short and long-term recommendations and initiatives for each agency to follow after the adoption of the plan; provide recommendations on what the state can do to increase and improve trade with Mexico and the other bordering U.S. states; and address any important trade problems between Texas and Mexico.
- Review and provide recommendations to the TxDOT administration on proposed legislation, rules, policies, procedures and actions regarding international issues.
- Provide support as needed to the Assistant Executive Director for Border Trade Transportation, the districts, divisions, special offices, TxDOT administration and the commission.

- Assist the TxDOT administration, districts, divisions and offices in developing, implementing, coordinating and monitoring strategic and operational plans for international activities, especially those that cross geographic and functional areas.
- Facilitate, as necessary, contacts and programs between TxDOT representatives from the TxDOT administration, divisions, offices and districts and their counterparts in Mexico at the state and federal levels.
- Support the implementation of international/border-related elements of the Texas Transportation Plan, especially regarding border safety and efficiency.
- Coordinate meetings between TxDOT and Mexican officials regarding the Trans Texas Corridor. More information on the corridor can be found at [www.dot.state.tx.us/ttc/ttc\\_home.htm](http://www.dot.state.tx.us/ttc/ttc_home.htm)
- Coordinate the Border Technology Exchange Program.
- Respond to legislative inquiries and requests related to the border and international transportation issues.
- Serve on TxDOT's Research Management Committee 2 (Transportation Planning) as the lead for research studies related to NAFTA and the Texas-Mexico border.
- Do translations as needed (English to Spanish and vice versa).

In support of these responsibilities, the office publishes the following reports that provide more detail on the above activities:

- the *LTSS Quarterly Report*;
- the *Texas-Mexico International Bridges and Border Crossings: Existing and Proposed*; and,
- the *International Activities Report*.

## **Border Technology Exchange Program (BTEP)**

One effect of NAFTA on the U.S.–Mexico border region was the result of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the U.S. and Mexican Secretaries of Transportation on April 29, 1994. The MOU recognized the desire of both countries to improve the coordination and quality of land transportation systems in the border region, especially considering the increase in traffic due to NAFTA. The U.S.-Mexico Joint Working Committee (JWC) was created as a result of the first MOU, and the BTEP was created under the auspices of the JWC as the means by which the two countries could carry out their coordinating efforts. The program is funded by grant-type monies from the Federal Highway Administration and in-kind contributions from the U.S. and Mexican border states, as well as the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes.

Texas works closely with its Mexican border state counterparts to exchange infrastructure planning information, to identify each state's technical needs and to establish positive, open communications. In an effort to meet those needs, Technology Transfer Centers (T<sup>2</sup>) have been established in Chihuahua, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas along with training courses and activities such as official visits, planning meetings, technical exchanges, and conferences and workshops on transportation-related topics. A Technology Transfer Center is in the planning stages for the state of Coahuila.

Entities participating in BTEP include: TxDOT; the Federal Highway Administration; the DOTs of California, Arizona and New Mexico; the Mexican Transportation Institute; the Mexican Ministry of Communications and Transportation; the Mexican states of Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas; Mexican institutions of higher learning; and U.S. and Mexican publicly- and privately-employed engineers.

Along with other TxDOT divisions and districts, the Transportation Planning and Programming, Design and Construction Divisions, and the Laredo, El Paso and Pharr districts have participated extensively in the BTEP.

To coordinate the work of the numerous TxDOT districts, divisions and offices active in the program, the International Relations Office develops annual statewide plans compatible with the BTEP border-wide strategic plan agreed upon by all U.S.-Mexico participating federal and state entities. Statewide plans call for the creation of one more regional technology transfer center in Coahuila, sponsorship and coordination of a third PROVIAL (maintenance conference), and a range of other technical and informational exchanges and official visits. In addition to this BTEP statewide plan, each border district generated a BTEP plan of its own (coordinated with the IRO plan and their respective Mexican border state counterparts) highlighting exchange opportunities in their respective areas, which will be implemented in 2003. Through this program, Texas has sponsored numerous activities with the Mexican border states involving approximately 1,600 participants in eight years.

In supporting a wide range of activities, the Texas BTEP promotes five central objectives:

- Improving safe and efficient transborder transportation systems in the border region.
- Sharing planning information, standards and specifications.
- Enhancing professional and technical capabilities.
- Increasing institutional, technical and legal compatibility and understanding.
- Institutionalizing the technology exchange process.

BTEP is also an excellent forum to further develop working relationships with the four Mexican states that border Texas, as well as with other U.S. and Mexican transportation stakeholders. Working closely with Mexico and sharing transportation priorities will ensure the best use of funds in the border region and contribute to the safe and efficient transport of people and goods throughout the border area.

### **International Visitors**

Since 1994, TxDOT has hosted approximately 1,428 visitors from 35 countries including Algeria, Australia, Belarus, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Egypt, England, Finland, France, Ghana, Hungary, India, Italy, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Mongolia, the Netherlands, New Guinea, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey and Venezuela.

Many visitors contact TxDOT directly to request specific information for meetings or visits to particular offices or individuals. The International Relations Office coordinates these visits by arranging appointments and escorting the officials when necessary, ensuring proper protocol and cultural considerations. The visits generally last one to two days.

In addition to these short visits, the department has also received some international visitors for longer periods. Some transportation officials, who participate in an international program affiliated with the University of Texas at Austin and TxDOT, have hosted visitors for periods up to a month. The Border Technology Exchange Program anticipates sponsoring similar personnel exchanges with Mexico in the near future.

The opportunity to learn different techniques and methods is invaluable. These visits afford TxDOT employees the opportunity to learn first-hand about transportation agencies in other nations. Likewise, the information and technology that is shared during these visits also contributes to those countries' transportation systems. This is especially important as it pertains to Mexico because of the size of the border with Texas and the amount of commerce and tourism between the two countries.

## **Other District/Division/Office Activities**

The Pharr, Laredo and El Paso districts have histories of cooperation with transportation officials in the neighboring Mexican states. All three districts have made extensive efforts to develop close productive working relationships with their Mexican neighbors. Their goal is to develop a collaborative planning and programming process that will endure. Each district engineer (DE) has developed a district-wide Border Technology Exchange Program plan with its neighboring Mexican state which complements the BTEP statewide plan.

### **El Paso (ELP)**

The city of El Paso was selected as one of the Texas sites to test innovative Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) intended to make border crossings more efficient. The district is involved in the implementation and monitoring of that test.

The El Paso District is also involved in various task forces related to transportation issues such as traffic control and communication issues along the border. In addition, the district is active in information and technology exchange with the Technology Transfer Center (T<sup>2</sup>) in its neighboring border state of Chihuahua. The district sponsors a yearly visit by students involved in a masters degree program in transportation from the University of Chihuahua, which emphasizes traffic management innovations and ITS technology. The district provides staff support on Value Engineering/Value Analysis for BTEP.

The district participates in research studies related to road improvements on access routes to the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez bridges. The district is also involved in a binational twin cities' air quality initiative involving El Paso and Ciudad Juárez.

The district engineer is an ex-officio member of the International Planning and Transportation Committee, which serves the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez area. The committee's purpose is to facilitate information exchange, participate in joint research projects and other activities that benefit the region. This is the first international planning organization for neighboring Texas-Mexico cities.

### **Laredo (LRD)**

The Laredo district engineer provides updates to TxDOT as well as to officials from the Mexican states of Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, and Coahuila on projects in the Laredo District. District staff members have attended several planners' meetings held between Tamaulipas, Coahuila and Nuevo León in an effort to share information on planning operations.

As part of the technology exchange process with Texas' Mexican counterparts, the Laredo District supported workshops, tours and visits with Nuevo León, Coahuila and Tamaulipas. In addition, the district provided technical support to Coahuila's Director of Roads for a project in Piedras Negras.

The second international bridge in Eagle Pass (Camino Real International Bridge, opened in September 1999) provided the forum for a Value Engineering exercise that resulted in substantial savings for TxDOT in terms of the infrastructure to the bridge. Laredo District engineers joined their counterparts in Coahuila and others in significantly improving the bridge structure. Laredo District engineers have also participated in Value Engineering activities in Tamaulipas (see Pharr).

Future opportunities for technology exchange have been developed at the World Trade Bridge. As presented in the district-wide BTEP plan, these include binational study opportunities on work involving hydraulic pavement, bridge and lighting construction, landscaping, signage, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), earthwork and drainage structures.

The district's Director of Operations participated in the PROVIAL (maintenance conference which focused on ITS) seminar in Nuevo León, Mexico, in April 1999. The exchange of technology between the various highway agencies attending the conference has helped to improve their knowledge of traffic applications using ITS technology.

### **Pharr (PHR)**

The Pharr District has been actively involved in the Border Technology Exchange Program. The district has sponsored workshops, tours and visits of Mexican counterparts from Nuevo León and Tamaulipas, covering all areas of district operations. Additionally, district staff members have traveled to Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas, to meet with officials from the Secretaría de Desarrollo Industrial, Comercial y Turístico (SEDICOT-Ministry of Industrial, Commercial and Tourist Development) to continue with binational technology exchange and coordination of projects along the Texas-Mexico border.

The district coordinated the process of evaluating the feasibility of rehabilitating and preserving the historic Roma Suspension Bridge with the SEDICOT and the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes (SCT).

The Pharr District has elaborated a district-wide BTEP plan stressing exchange opportunities resulting from the entity's daily activities. As a direct result of this plan, the district has participated in several technology exchange workshops with Mexican border states on Value Engineering, Asphaltic Concrete Design, Bridge Scour and many other topics. With support from the Design Division and the Laredo and El Paso district engineers, the Pharr district engineers took the lead role in border-wide efforts. A Value Engineering workshop took place in Ciudad Victoria with the Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (SEDESOL – Ministry of Social

Development) to study ongoing construction and design efforts to develop a corridor through the Sierra Madre Mountains which would meet today's standards. The corridor is foreseen as an integral part of an international NAFTA corridor that will eventually connect to the proposed IH-69. This Value Engineering study resulted in substantial project improvement and achieved significant savings in construction time and funds. The Pharr District continues to coordinate with IRO and DES to provide additional value engineering training courses to the Mexican states through the BTEP. The district provided an engineer to assist in instructing on a nationwide teleconference (in Chihuahua) on Value Engineering via satellite. The teleconference was received simultaneously in all state SCT centers in Mexico.

The Pharr District also participated in the Annual BTEP Technology Transfer planning meeting held in Monterrey, Nuevo León on March 5-7, 2001. During that meeting the work plans and issues of principal interest for the various T<sup>2</sup> Centers were established and prioritized.

In February 2002, the district held a SuperPave Showcase at the district office that included 16 engineers from various Mexican agencies. The sessions included presentations on the design and construction techniques utilized, a project visit in which the participants observed the material in the field, and a tour of the district laboratory.

Most recently the district participated in the October 2002, meeting of the Border Liaison Mechanism (BLM) in Brownsville, Texas. The BLM is an organization co-chaired by the Mexican Consuls in McAllen and Brownsville and the U.S. Consul in Matamoros. The organization, which is comprised of governmental entities from both sides of the border, meets approximately every four months to hear concerns regarding the border region.

### **Construction (CST)**

The Construction Division hosts a number of international visitors from the public and private sectors interested in materials and construction matters, pavement design, pavement management and pavement data equipment development and implementation. The Construction Division further supplements technology exchange by providing these visitors with information on research and design criteria and processes.

Construction Division personnel provide important technical support to NAFTA's Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee Working Group 2 on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions.

### **Design (DES)**

Design Division personnel have participated in design criteria presentations for Mexican transportation officials. Some of these presentations were made in cooperation with transportation research centers such as the Center for Transportation Research (CTR) and the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI).

This division also provides staff support to the Border Technology Exchange Program and the Joint Working Committee. Especially noteworthy in this respect is the division's border-wide



effort to bring together TxDOT and Mexican engineers to improve binational roads and bridges through Value Engineering.

### **Environmental Affairs (ENV)**

The Environmental Affairs Division participates in the following activities:

- Special study requirements for archaeological investigations where foreign laboratories must be used.
- Cooperation and exchange of information between archaeological laboratories.
- Excavation of archaeological sites of international importance.
- Restoration of the historic International Roma Suspension Bridge, a joint project of the TxDOT/FHWA Enhancement Program and the government of Mexico.

### **Motor Carrier (MCD)**

The Motor Carrier Division along with the Traffic Operations Division (TRF) managed the development of the Texas Intelligent Transportation System/Commercial Vehicle Operations (ITS/CVO) Business Plan, which was completed in January 2001. The division managed the development of the plan through a multi-discipline steering committee, which included other divisions, state and federal agencies, and industry associations. Although the ITS/CVO Business Plan is a statewide plan, it encompasses activities that will be beneficial to cross-border traffic. MCD staff members continue to be involved in the plan's implementation.

Division staff members participate in informational seminars and transportation fairs related to cross border trucking, briefings for international visitors, and NAFTA-related issues as needed. In addition, the MCD Director is the chairperson of the Western Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (WASHTO) Committee on Highway Transport. The mission of this committee is to promote uniform laws, regulations, and practices among member jurisdictions and other jurisdictions for the efficient movement of goods and services, while ensuring the safety of all highway users and preserving the highway infrastructure. This also includes Canadian and Mexican truck uniformity issues. The committee meets twice a year.

MCD administers administrative rules for the commercial motor carrier registration and insurance requirements under the Texas Transportation Code, Chapter 643, and single state registration under the Texas Transportation Code, Chapter 645, which applies to international motor carriers operating in Texas. MCD's Compliance and Enforcement Branch provides public assistance (including assistance in Spanish), conducts field audits, and administers complaint resolutions with regard to motor carriers operating in Texas. The administration of these responsibilities by MCD affects international motor carriers operating in Texas.

MCD is also responsible for administering Texas' oversize/overweight permit program under the Texas Transportation Code, Chapter 623. These requirements impact Mexican-based carriers that transport oversized or overweight loads into Texas.

In addition, the division has a web site that includes a Mexican-based Commercial Motor Carriers Vehicle Checklist and a link to the department's *International Motor Carriers Frequently Asked Questions* list. The web site address is <http://www.dot.state.tx.us>. Select "Trucking and Vehicle Storage Facilities."

### **Research and Technology Implementation (RTI)**

The Research and Technology Implementation Office administers the federal Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP). TxDOT contracts with the Texas A&M University System's Engineering Extension Service for the program. LTAP program administrators have met with counterparts in Mexico to advise and coordinate activities. Additionally, international requests for research reports are received and filled. Contact information for obtaining research reports can be found on the TxDOT website at <http://www.dot.state.tx.us> by going to "About TxDOT" and selecting Research and Technology Implementation on the functional organizational chart.

### **Traffic Operations (TRF)**

The Traffic Operations Division is involved in a number of international activities including:

- Participation in various groups, organizations and committees with substantial international memberships such as AASHTO, the Intelligent Transportation Society of America, the Transportation Research Board, and the Institute of Transportation Engineers.
- Development of Intelligent Transportation Systems related deployment and planning projects in El Paso, Del Rio, Laredo, and the Lower Rio Grande Valley.
- Research and deployment of various signage initiatives for the Texas-Mexico border region including warning signs and bilingual signs.

### **Transportation Planning and Programming (TPP)**

TPP works in cooperation with transportation planning entities on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border and on a wide variety of activities as illustrated below. TPP is also involved in research efforts that investigate "best practices" in transportation planning in other countries and their applicability in Texas. Other research and planning efforts involve assessing the impact of trade and transportation in other countries on both Texas and the United States.

TPP's Director represents Texas on the Joint Working Committee in the area of planning and programming. The JWC completed the U.S./Mexico Binational Border Transportation Planning and Programming Study (Binational Study) in 1998. The Hidalgo Port-of-Entry Study intended to supplement the port-of-entry case studies conducted under the Binational Planning and Programming Study, was completed in October 2000.

TPP oversaw the interagency study conducted by the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) to collect and analyze freight delay data to and from Laredo and Nuevo Laredo at the World Trade Bridge in August 2000.

TPP also has the lead responsibility for the state international bridge application process as enacted by the 74th Texas Legislature in 1995 (Senate Bill 1633), which requires a political subdivision or private entity to "obtain approval from the Texas Transportation Commission for the construction of the bridge before requesting approval from the federal government." Factors to be regarded by the commission when considering approval include:

- The local sponsor's financial resources.
- Whether the revenue generated by the bridge is sufficient to finance the planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance of the bridge.
- Whether the bridge construction is consistent with the state's transportation plan.
- The facility's potential impacts on the economy of the region, the environment, traffic congestion and free trade.

In making its determination, the commission consults with the following agencies/offices:

- Department of Public Safety
- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
- Texas Historical Commission
- Texas Department of Agriculture
- Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission
- Texas Department of Economic Development
- General Land Office
- other agencies the Commission deems appropriate

## **Travel (TRV)**

The Travel Division is involved in international communications and activities by virtue of the travel and litter prevention information and literature it publishes and distributes.

Travel literature is mailed throughout the world to people who request it. During the 2001 calendar year, approximately 48,793 packets were mailed to international destinations. Of these packets more than 16,153 were mailed to Canada, 4,465 to the Czech Republic, 3,393 to Germany, and 749 to Mexico.

To appeal to an important market segment, the Travel Division publishes a Spanish-language travel brochure, *Bienvenidos a Texas* (Welcome to Texas). In addition to the printed media, the division also produces Spanish-language versions of television and radio public service announcements for "Don't Mess with Texas," the department's popular litter prevention program.

The division publishes monthly editions of *Texas Highways*, the official travel magazine of Texas. The publication encourages recreational travel to and within the state and tells Texas

stories to readers around the world. Currently, the magazine has subscribers from 91 countries. Texas Highways magazine is not only mailed throughout the world but can also be found at the website address <http://www.texashighways.com>.

Through Texas Highways, TxDOT has been an active member of the International Regional Magazine Association (IRMA) since 1977. IRMA membership consists of regional magazines similar to Texas Highways from all over the U.S., Ireland, Canada, Bermuda and other countries.

Another useful web site for Texas travel information is <http://www.traveltex.com>. An interactive map allows viewers to select from among the seven Texas regions to access information from the Texas State Travel Guide, the Texas Events Calendar and the Texas Public Campground Guide among other sources.

TxDOT's litter prevention programs, which are managed by the TRV division, have received international attention. Callers from around the world have inquired about the department's famous "Don't Mess with Texas" public awareness campaign and the "Adopt-a-Highway" program, through which companies and organizations adopt a section of a highway and keep it litter-free. Visitors from the United Kingdom, Japan, Mexico and Switzerland have come to Austin to learn more about the program and the possibility of starting similar programs in their countries. The Travel Division began a web site in 1998 to showcase TxDOT's popular litter prevention programs. Information on these programs can be found at <http://www.dontmesswithtexas.org>.

In December 1998, the Travel Division hosted the 2nd International Adopt-a-Highway Conference in San Antonio. Participants included representatives from 22 U.S. states including Washington D.C., and the Mexican states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas that were sponsored by the Border Technology Exchange Program. In addition, the Travel Division employees are actively involved in the International Adopt-A-Highway Association.

### **Vehicle Titles and Registration (VTR)**

Personnel from the Vehicle Titles and Registration Division are actively involved in border affairs. VTR Regional Managers located along the border frequently meet with local and state law enforcement and Custom's officials on current border issues. Division staff members serve on various committees and meet regularly with representatives from government entities and private enterprises. VTR's Director is a member of the NAFTA Committee led by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA). The group meets twice a year and is made up of AAMVA representatives and motor vehicle administrators from the U.S. and Mexican border states.

The Automobile Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA), which is a part of VTR, is actively involved in efforts to reduce the number of vehicles that are stolen and transported across both

sides of the border. A more detailed description of the ATPA can be found on pages 21-22 of this report.

Texas Statute further defines the roles that TxDOT and VTR play in foreign affairs. A portion of the statute regulates foreign commercial motor vehicle involvement in commercial motor transportation in Texas. Chapter 648 of the Transportation Code, addresses Foreign Commercial Motor Transportation, and defines a "commercial motor vehicle" to include a foreign commercial motor vehicle, and defines "motor carrier" to include a foreign motor carrier.

The operating boundaries for foreign commercial vehicles are currently limited to cities located along the contiguous border with Mexico. The border commercial zones for the United States/Mexico ports of entry in Texas are based on the number of miles from the city limit boundaries, depending on the population of the city. The four-county area of Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy counties is considered one zone and cities located in this zone are not restricted by mileage or population. The boundaries of a border commercial zone may be modified or established only as provided by federal law. In anticipation of the U.S. Department of Transportation lifting the moratorium on cross-border traffic, the Texas Legislature in 1995 provided several registration options for Mexican commercial carriers.

Detailed information on NAFTA, registration requirements, forms and frequently asked questions is available from the TxDOT web site <http://www.dot.state.tx.us> under the link "Automobiles." The application for the NAFTA Annual Permit (VTR-29 NAFTA) is also available on the Internet and can be accessed the same way. VTR also has provided a revised NAFTA booklet (in English with Spanish translations) entitled *General Information on NAFTA and Cross Border Traffic*, which includes forms and instructions from VTR and the Motor Carrier Division.

The International Registration Plan/International Fuel Tax Agreement (IRP/IFTA) Border State meeting was held in Chandler, Arizona on October 1, 2002. A working group of the four border states was hosted by the National Governors' Association (NGA) in coordination with USDOT (FHWA). The purpose was to explore the concerns and impact on the border states when the border is opened, and how to mitigate them. Some of the issues mentioned were the lifting of the moratorium and a U.S.-Mexico MOU on safety issues. Based on concerns of the states, a proposal was made to set up a satellite office in Mexico, funded by the Mexican and U.S. governments, to do registrations and collect funds. The border states would have representatives supervising the IRP and IFTA processes. There are still areas of concern such as cost, equity of burden, audit, communication/language, commitment, enforcement/compliance, and currency conversion that would have to be resolved before the proposal moves forward. Two issues that overshadow progress in this area are the authority of the jurisdictions and the cost. Legal issues are also a concern including the Mexican constitutional issues with regard to Mexico joining the Plan, and the issues and requirements for U.S. carriers going into Mexico.

## **SECTION II**

### **COMMITTEES, CONFERENCES AND ORGANIZATIONS**

## **Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee (LTSS)**

**Description:** The North American Free Trade Agreement established a Committee on Standards-Related Measures to help the United States, Canada and Mexico monitor and implement the agreement. Four subcommittees, including the Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee, were established to address specific issues.

Trilateral Working Groups were established to concentrate on specific issues. Additionally, Transportation Consultative Group (TCG) Working Groups were established to address non-standards issues that affect crossborder movements among the three countries. They operate in conjunction with the LTSS, but these groups were not specified in NAFTA and are not officially a part of the LTSS. The groups as currently configured are:

- LTSS Working Group 1: Driver and Vehicle Standards and Supervision of Motor Carrier Compliance
- LTSS Working Group 2: Vehicle Weights and Dimensions
- LTSS Working Group 3: Traffic Control Devices for Highways  
(Work completed in 1999)
- LTSS Working Group 5: Hazardous Materials Standards
  
- TCG Working Group 1: Cross Border Operations and Facilitation  
(made from previous TCGs 1 and 2)
- TCG Working Group 2: Rail Standards (previously LTSS Working Group 4)
- TCG Working Group 3: Automated Data Exchange
- TCG Working Group 4: Science and Technology
- TCG Working Group 5: Maritime and Port Policy

**Participants:** This trilateral subcommittee is composed of representatives from the United States, Canada and Mexico. The IRO Director, who coordinates closely with the Texas Governor's Office, the Secretary of State's Office and the TxDOT Assistant Executive Director for Border Trade Transportation, has represented the state of Texas on the committee. The DES division provides technical support for Working Group 2. MCD also provides significant support for Working Groups 1, 2 and 5.

**Purpose:** To develop recommendations for harmonization of standards for bus, rail and truck operations and transportation of hazardous materials among Canada, Mexico and the United States.

**Initiatives:** The LTSS established working groups pursuant to Article 913 of NAFTA. The LTSS and TCG working groups meet as often as necessary to accomplish NAFTA goals.

Some of the LTSS's accomplishments to date have been:

- The signature of a United States-Mexico Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on drug and alcohol testing for motor vehicle drivers.
- The signature of a United States-Mexico MOU regarding commercial driver programs.
- The formation of a Technical Task Force on performance criteria for highway freight vehicles.
- The publication of an updated North American Emergency Response Guide regarding hazardous materials in English, Spanish and French.
- The adoption of a uniform minimum age for commercial vehicle drivers.
- The inauguration of a motor carrier safety data exchange program.
- The recognition of several binational agreements as the basis for achieving reciprocity of driver medical standards.
- The promotion of trilateral communication among insurance regulators to discuss issues related to insurance coverage for motor carriers engaged in cross-border operations.
- The completion of a 1998 U.S.-Canada bilateral report on railroad operating practices.
- Mexican federal law enforcement official training in Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) inspection standards.
- A Canadian tank truck inspection course offered in Mexico.
- An agreement to develop a North American model rule and standards document related to the transport of hazardous materials.
- A commitment to the development of common format and contents for a North American log book for recording drivers' hours-of-service.
- An agreement on common safety performance information to be required of motor carriers.
- A workshop on public/private partnerships for financing.
- An agreement on a common language requirement for drivers.
- An agreement to pursue ongoing information exchange on motor carrier operating requirements.
- An analysis and comparison of traffic signage in the three countries.
- An analysis of regulations affecting rail safety in the three countries.
- A five-year plan for increased cooperation in the field of North American transportation technologies.
- The trilateral information exchange on emissions testing developments.
- Extensive outreach activities to educate commercial drivers (both truckers and bus operators) about crossborder regulations.

**Meetings:** The LTSS met for the first time in Mexico on July 11-12, 1994. The group meets once a year in a plenary session. The LTSS, TCG working groups and associated technical panels meet periodically.

**Benefits:** This committee affords TxDOT the opportunity to closely monitor and provide input to the negotiations among the three NAFTA nations, as they discuss the compatibility of transportation standards.



## **Automobile Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA)**

**Description:** The authority was created in 1991 by the Texas Legislature. The Authority distributes funds through a grant process, and eligible organizations and agencies make applications for funding to the Authority. Funds are awarded for projects to create a statewide effort for the reduction of vehicle theft.

**Participants:** The Authority's board of directors consists of six governor-appointed individuals (two representing each of the following: law enforcement, consumers, and insurance companies) plus the Executive Director of the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), who serves ex-officio. The Authority administers the ATPA fund and oversees the operation of the ATPA program. The ATPA Office Director and staff report to TxDOT's Director of the Vehicle Titles and Registration Division.

**Purpose:** To reduce motor vehicle theft statewide. Categories for projects that are eligible for funding include activities for enforcement/apprehension, prosecution/adjudication, public education, prevention of the sale of stolen auto parts, and reduction of stolen vehicles moved across the Mexican border.

### **Initiatives:**

- The Authority established a binational Border Solutions Committee in August 1992 to identify problems and possible solutions to motor vehicle theft along the Texas-Mexico border. The committee members include representatives from federal, state and local governments on both sides of the border. The committee meets twice a year, alternating sites between Texas and Mexican border cities.
- A statewide "Help End Auto Theft" (H.E.A.T.) registration program is part of the enabling legislation. The program began in November 1993, and as of October 2002 there were more than 96,190 vehicles registered. The DPS administers the program, and all cities and towns in the state may participate.
- The Border Auto Theft Information Center (BATIC) was established through ATPA funds in September 1993 to answer inquiries about stolen vehicles from authorized law enforcement agencies in the United States and Mexico. Through this program, an average of 1,400 stolen vehicles is recovered annually from Mexico. BATIC provides 24-hour service to U.S. and Mexican police who are seeking information on the status of stolen vehicles. Since its creation, BATIC has assisted in the recovery of 9,647 stolen vehicles.
- An Insurance Fraud Committee was established in 1996 to address the problem of automobile insurance fraud. The committee addresses problems of fraud and seeks potential solutions within Texas and internationally.

- The Grantee Advisory Committee considers matters of concern and interest to both grantees and ATPA. This committee is evidence that the ATPA board values the opinions of the grantees. This committee is very much a part of the ATPA future.
- DPS conducts training on motor vehicle theft for U.S. and Mexican law enforcement personnel. It provides training to tax assessors/collectors, registration clerks and law enforcement officers in the detection of counterfeit documents used in the title process and registration of stolen vehicles in Texas. Funding is provided by ATPA.

**Meetings:** The ATPA Board meets four times a year, unless there is a need for additional meetings. The meetings are usually held in Austin.

**Benefits:** The Authority represents an effective forum for overseeing the operation of an anti-theft program and administration of funding to reduce vehicle theft in Texas. The motor vehicle theft rate (number of stolen vehicles per 100,000 registered vehicles) has been reduced by over 51% since 1991. Ranges of initiatives have helped foster improved communications and cooperation on automobile theft issues with Mexico.

## **Joint Working Committee (JWC)**

**Description:** This Committee was created by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed on April 29, 1994, by U.S. Transportation Secretary Peña and Mexican Transportation Secretary Gamboa. The JWC oversaw the funding, logistics, and research of a borderwide binational study, which was completed in 1998. A new MOU was signed in 2000 to continue the work of the Committee.

**Participants:** The JWC members include:

- Four representatives from the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes (SCT – Ministry of Communications and Transportation) and four from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).
  - The senior person of these groups is the chief of delegation for the respective U.S. and Mexico delegations.
  - One member from each of these delegations is a border-wide coordinator for the respective delegation.
- A chief delegate and a co-delegate as required represent each U.S. and Mexican border state.
  - TxDOT's TPP (Transportation Planning and Programming) and IRO (International Relations Office) Directors are the Texas co-delegates.
- One representative from the U.S. State Department and the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE - Ministry of Foreign Relations) respectively.

**Purpose:** The JWC serves as a forum for the coordination of border transportation planning and programming activities along the Texas-Mexico border. The JWC is also used as a medium for discussing other binational border area transportation issues.

**Goals:** The JWC Memo of Understanding for 2000 cites the following goals:

- Maintain frequent and effective communication among the parties and their respective border states from both countries concerning transportation planning.
- Closely coordinate between the entities involved in the US-Mexico Joint Working Committee to support the planning processes at the federal, state, regional, and local levels.
- Coordinate with the U.S.-Mexico Binational Bridges and Border Crossings Group and other federal and state organizations involved in activities related to border crossings.
- Stimulate and promote the application of innovative methods to improve the safe, efficient, and economical cross border movement of people and goods.
- Pursue additional goals as agreed upon by the participants.

**Initiatives:** The Memo of Understanding for 2000 includes the nine lines of work listed below:

- Border Infrastructure Needs Assessment
- Geographic Information System /Live Data Bank
- Transborder Corridor Planning
- Coordination System for the Operation of Border Ports of Entry
- Intelligent Transportation Systems
- Innovative Financing Mechanisms for Border Related Improvements
- Border Technology Exchange Program
- Air Quality
- Intermodal Transportation

The 2003 – 2005 JWC Work Plan includes the following work-plan subcommittees, which specifically focus on aspects of the Smart Border Plan signed in mid 2002 by the U.S. and Mexican presidents.

- Identifying a North American Transportation System
- Border Wide Planning and Programming
- Innovative Financing
- Transportation Integration with POE
- Geographic Information Systems
- Relief of Bottlenecks at the Border

**Meetings:** The JWC met for the first time on August 1-2, 1994, in San Antonio, Texas. The JWC meets twice a year on an as needed basis.

**Benefits:** The JWC is the only U.S.-Mexico border-wide planning work group.

## **United States-Mexico Binational Bridges and Border Crossings Group**

**Description:** This group discusses proposed international bridges and border crossings, the status/needs of current border crossing facilities and transportation access.

**Participants:** Formed in 1981, the group is composed of delegations from the governments of the United States and Mexico. The U.S. Department of State's Coordinator for U.S.-Mexico Border Affairs chairs the U.S. delegation, while Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores' (SRE) Director General for North American Affairs chairs the Mexican delegation. U.S. and Mexico border state representatives have been included in the sessions since 1994.

**Purpose:** To discuss proposed bridges and border crossings and their related infrastructure and to exchange technical information so that those projects, which both federal governments deem beneficial, may complete the approval process of the two respective governments. Related issues such as toll roads and other infrastructure projects are discussed, as well as operational matters involving existing and future crossings.

**Meetings:** The group meets twice a year to discuss proposed and existing bridges and border crossings, and related matters along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The meetings of the group include participation of the U.S. and Mexican delegations composed of representatives from federal agencies that have an interest in/or responsibility for the conduct of bilateral relations and permitting of new crossings (international ports of entry). Issues discussed include:

- Inspections
- Highway/rail access
- Construction of facilities
- Environment
- Monitoring of the international boundary

The meetings include a U.S.-only and a Mexico-only meeting followed by three binational sessions over a three-day period. During the public sessions advocates of proposed bridges and border crossings (and related infrastructure projects) make presentations. These are interactive sessions in which the U.S. and Mexican delegations can query the presenters on the projects. During the technical sessions, the delegations meet to discuss specific border crossings and exchange views and technical information. Also presented at that time are reports of binational committees' activities and major programs that directly impact the U.S.- Mexico border area. Each U.S. and Mexican border state representative is asked to make a presentation on the development of relevant transportation infrastructure projects since the previous meeting. The final session is a plenary at which positions are summarized by the two delegations. In addition, the group does periodic "border walks" along the border in between the regular semi-annual meetings alternating between the U.S. and Mexico.

**Benefits:** This group allows state participation in all sessions of the U.S. delegation, the value of

which is twofold. First, state DOT representatives can provide input that FHWA delegation members cannot. Such project-specific information should be among those elements considered in advancing proposed bridge and crossing projects through approval processes. In addition, the information that state DOTs take home from the closed technical session will help those agencies in transportation infrastructure development planning. Texas plays a key role in this forum since it is the only border state that requires a state international crossings permit prior to a U.S. Presidential Permit being signed.

Working groups were formed for the first time during the October 2002 session, in response to the section of the U.S.-Mexico 22-Point Partnership Plan that deals with infrastructure. The four working groups (Long-term Planning, Harmonization of Procedures for Approving Border Crossings, Relief of Bottlenecks and Financing of Ports) are to develop recommendations to be submitted to the Binational Committee for consideration.

**Note:** Details regarding the crossings are available in the TxDOT publication *Texas-Mexico International Bridges and Border Crossings: Existing and Proposed*, available from the International Relations Office or on the web at [www.dot.state.tx.us/iro/](http://www.dot.state.tx.us/iro/).

## **Border Governors' Conference**

**Description:** Governors of the ten U.S.-Mexican border states meet once a year to discuss topics of mutual interest and concern. The members of the six work tables meet during the year to develop recommendations and follow up on action plans. Each work table focuses on one of these areas: agriculture, border crossings (includes transportation), economic development, education, environment, health, special issues and water. From this input, a joint declaration is developed and delivered to the secretaries of transportation, the public and the presidents of both countries.

**Participants:** Includes representatives from each of the border governors' offices, and state delegates for each of the work tables. Federal government representatives are invited as observers. A representative from Texas and one from the Mexican state of Nuevo León are the 2001-2003 co-chairs on the Border Crossings work table. TxDOT's IRO Director coordinates department input as requested on border transportation issues.

**Purpose:** To provide a forum which enables the ten border governors to develop personal relationships; to identify and address issues and opportunities of the border region; and to promote initiatives for improving the quality of life of the people in the region.

The conference has five objectives:

- 1) To foment and strengthen personal relations among the ten border governors.
- 2) To promote unified action along the U.S.-Mexico border and on national issues.
- 3) To address border problems and opportunities.
- 4) To jointly promote the orchestration to foster and consolidate social and economic development throughout the border region.
- 5) To sponsor complementary productive activity.

**Meetings:** The conference is held annually. The Border Crossings Worktable, in which TxDOT participates, and other worktables meet between conferences to develop recommendations to be included in the joint communique the governors sign at the annual conference, as well as to follow up on recommendations from previous communiqués.

**Benefits:** This forum provides TxDOT with an opportunity to work closely with the Governor's Office, the Secretary of State's Office and the Texas Department of Economic Development in establishing coordinated positions on transportation and economic issues. The conference also promotes coordination with neighboring states in making recommendations regarding the border area.

## **International Planning and Transportation Committee**

**Description:** This committee originally named the International Regional Planning and Development Committee, and later the Camino Real Planning and Coordinating Committee, serves the El Paso area and was established on March 16, 1992.

**Participants:** Representatives from the City of El Paso; El Paso County; the Texas Department of Transportation; the City of Socorro, Texas; the City of Sunland Park, New Mexico; the City of Las Cruces, New Mexico; Doña Ana County, New Mexico; and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. The El Paso District engineer represents TxDOT on the committee and serves as an ex-officio member.

**Purpose:** To facilitate information exchange, participate in joint research projects, and other activities to benefit the El Paso region. The committee is the first international planning organization that includes a Texas city and its surrounding area, and a neighboring Mexican city.

**Meetings:** As needed.

**Benefits:** The Committee is a unique mechanism for regional transportation planning involving several cities in two counties of two different U.S. states and an adjoining major Mexican metropolitan area.



## **Motor Carrier NAFTA Task Force**

**Description:** The Motor Carrier NAFTA task force operates under the aegis of the Base State Working Group as provided for under Title IV, Motor Carrier Act, Section 4008, Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991.

**Participants:** The task force consists of representatives from Arizona, California, Maine, Montana, New Mexico, Texas and Utah. There are also representatives from the Federal Highway Administration, the National Conference on State Legislatures, the International Registration Plan, HELP, Inc., the American Trucking Associations, the National Governors' Association and the International Fuel Tax Agreement. The Director of TxDOT's Vehicle Titles and Registration Division represents Texas on the task force.

**Purpose:** According to Section 4008 of ISTEA, the task force was established for the purpose of: "Proposing procedures for resolving disputes among states participating in the International Registration Plan and among states participating in the International Fuel Tax Agreement, including designation of the Department of Transportation, or any other person for resolving such disputes;" and, "Providing technical assistance to states participating or seeking to participate in the plan or in the agreement."

**Meetings:** Once a year

**Benefits:** This task force is an effective forum for addressing the fundamental differences in motor carrier operations among U.S. and Mexican states and Canadian provinces.

At the November 2002 meeting, a three step approach was considered: 1) use of permits, 2) intermediate step to have the four border states (Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas) serve as base jurisdictions for Mexican carriers, and 3) Mexico joining the IRP and IFTA Agreements.

## **Western Transportation Trade Network (WTTN)**

**Description:** WTTN was established at the 1993 Western Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (WASHTO) conference to introduce some organization into the north-south trade corridor promotion in the western United States. The concept is to encourage state DOTs and other interests to cooperate in regional transportation and trade corridor development to make best use of limited federal funds. The network is under leadership and authority of WASHTO's Policy Committee.

**Participants:** The Colorado DOT is designated by the WASHTO Policy Committee as the lead state for WTTN. Other members include planning directors of western state DOTs. The Director of the Transportation Planning and Programming Division is TxDOT's representative to the WTTN.

**Purpose:** To promote economic growth and maximize regional trade opportunities among Canada, the United States and Mexico. The Western Transportation Trade Network is charged with defining and implementing a multimodal transportation and trade network. This facilitates coordination of transportation planning by western states.

**Initiatives:** The Network conducted a two-part study to serve WTTN aims to cultivate a multimodal transportation and trade network. Phase I of the study identified network deficiencies. Phase II, which involved the preparation of a menu of solutions to network deficiencies, was completed in September 1999.

**Benefits:** Because most U.S.-Mexican commerce passes through Texas, any north-south transportation and trade corridor development will affect the flow of that commerce. Texas is viewed as a critical participant because of its position in binational commerce and because of the size of its congressional delegation, which may influence corridor development funding. It is in TxDOT's best interest to be actively involved in decision making as WTTN develops, both from the technical standpoint of transportation planning expertise, and to assure positive relations with Mexican interests.

## **SECTION III PUBLICATIONS**

In addition to the *International Activities Report*, the following TxDOT publications deal with TxDOT's international endeavors.

***Texas-Mexico International Bridges and Border Crossings: Existing and Proposed***

*(International Relations Office)* This report, which is updated annually, is a comprehensive guide to all of the existing and proposed border crossings connecting Texas and the Mexican states of Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila and Chihuahua. The report gives descriptive information such as maps of the area, planned improvements with estimated costs, connecting roadway and general traffic information for each bridge. For the proposed bridges, information is given regarding the costs of bridges and supporting facilities, as well as permit status. The 2002 edition of the report, also available in Spanish, can be found on the Web at: [www.dot.state.tx.us/iro/](http://www.dot.state.tx.us/iro/)

***Planning Activities along the Texas/Mexico Border***

*(Design Division)* This report is published every two years in response to a statutory requirement set forth in Article 6673j-1 of the Texas Civil Statutes. The next report should be published on January 1, 2003 in preparation for the legislative session. The report provides an overview of TxDOT's planning process, a status report for major border area projects and a summary of TxDOT's feasibility studies in the region. All of these areas are discussed in the context of NAFTA.

***Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee (LTSS) Quarterly Report***

*(International Relations Office)* In 1995, the Texas Legislature passed a bill requiring TxDOT to publish this report for the Legislature; the Governor's Office and the Attorney General's office. It provides a summary of activities related to the LTSS and its associated groups over the relevant three-month period. The report is available on the Web at [www.dot.state.tx.us/iro/](http://www.dot.state.tx.us/iro/)

***Oversize, Overweight Permit Rule Booklet***

*(Motor Carrier Division)* This publication provides administrative rules adopted under 43 TAC, Chapter 28 to implement provisions of Texas Transportation Code, Chapter 623. This publication includes information regarding the process for obtaining oversize and overweight permits.

***Motor Carrier Rules Booklet***

*(Motor Carrier Division)* This publication provides administrative rules adopted under 43 TAC, Chapter 18 to implement provisions of Texas Transportation Code, Chapters 643 and 645. This publication includes information regarding motor carrier registration requirements, including requirements for Mexico-based carriers.

***Motor Carrier Handbook***

*(Motor Carrier Division)* This publication provides information for motor carriers operating in Texas, including Mexico-based carriers. The Handbook includes practical information needed to meet Texas' motor carrier registration, insurance, size and weight, and oversize/overweight permit requirements.

***Truck Tips Brochure***

(Motor Carrier Division) This brochure outlines basic requirements for operating as a motor carrier in Texas, and includes a comprehensive list of state agencies whose requirements apply to motor carriers.

***General Information on NAFTA and Cross Border Traffic***

(Vehicle Titles and Registration Division and Motor Carrier Division) This publication provides general information and responds to frequently asked questions (FAQs) on NAFTA and the international movement of commercial motor vehicles. The publication includes sections on the NAFTA Annual Permit complete with the application (the permit application is available in English and Spanish); general information on the 72 and 144-Hour Permits; International Motor Carrier information; Motor Carrier Division applications; Oversize/Overweight Permits (available in English and Spanish); additional telephone numbers and addresses for VTR Regional offices and the Border County Tax Offices (in English Only ); and the MCD One-Stop-Shop Telephone Menu. The general information and FAQs are available on the Internet at [www.dot.state.tx.us](http://www.dot.state.tx.us) by selecting “Automobiles”. This publication will be available in English and Spanish in January 2003.